

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

SLAVERY

IN

THE UNITED STATES.

BY THOMAS WILLIAMS.

My wish is, that the Convention may adopt no temporary expedients ;
but probe the defects of the Constitution to the bottom.—*Washington.*

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Should one be disposed to condemn the freedom, which is used in this small tract on so great a subject, he may receive instruction and relief from Old England's wisest Philosopher in the sentiments, confirmed and sanctioned by the most prudent and modest of New England's Christian Gentlemen; as announced and approved at the Centennial Celebration of Havard College, on the era of the second century from its foundation :

" Harvard University—May she hold in respect the precept of Bacon ; Take counsel of both times ; of the anticenter *What is best* ;—of the later time *what is fittest* ;—to reform without bravery, or scandal of former times : yet to set it down to ourselves, as well *to create good precedents, as to follow them.*"—QUINCY'S HISTORY OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY. Vol. II., page 662.

CONSIDERATIONS.

SECTION I. THE FIRST COMPROMISE.

“ Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump ? ”

In the history of nations never has arisen a more important subject, for rational and practical consideration than the question which now demands and deserves the attention of the people in these States, in respect to Slavery. This question, in the wonderful arrangements of Divine Providence, is now so placed before this people, as leaves no possible foundation, or even the smallest prospect for the permanent adjustment of our national institutions, transactions and interests, until slavery, as it now exists in these States ; or civil, religious and personal liberty, as proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, shall be constitutionally and practically established, in respect to every person, through the whole length and breadth of the land. On this great subject, one question and only one question needs to be candidly considered and truly and fairly answered : and that one question is—*What ought to be done ?*

If we would honestly consider and wisely answer this question, it is desirable and necessary to regard the sentiments professions and obligations of the people in these States. as they have been declared on the most important occasions ; as they have been connected with the transactions, which established our national existence ; and as they are recorded in the documents, which respect the principles and commencement of our national Independence. One of the earliest transactions of this description occurred in the first Congress of the Colonies, which was convened on the 4th of September, 1774, in Philadelphia. Of that event we have the following statement : “ In the year 1774, when

Britain threatened a war with us and was disposed to deny to us some part of the liberty, which we claimed; and we had a prospect of entering into a bloody conflict in defence of our own rights, the slavetrade, which had been practised, appeared so inconsistent with our own liberty, that a Congress, which then represented these United States, made a solemn resolution, in the name of all the people, whom they represented, in the following words, "We will neither import, nor purchase any slaves imported, after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slavetrade; and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities, or manufactures to those, who are concerned in it." All the people appeared to acquiesce in this resolution, in order to act a consistent part, while contending for their own liberties and to have any ground of hope in the protection and smiles of a righteous God and success in the struggle for our liberties. With this resolution we entered the combat; God appeared to be on our side and wrought wonders in our favor; disappointed those, who rose against us and established our freedom and independence."

Another transaction, in respect to our national existence and obligations, was the Declaration of Independence, which is entitled—The unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America. In this great and solemn transaction the Congress declare, that they act according to the station, which they are entitled to assume by the laws of nature and of nature's God. They also declare the native equality and unalienable rights of all human beings; and in accordance with these rights, they state the proper objects and righteous foundations of civil governments and political institutions. Then, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions; and with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, in support of their Declaration, they mutually pledge their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. These sentiments, professions and obligations are virtually renewed, by the people in these States, on the anniversary of our national existence and independence; and before the Supreme Judge of the world and the nations of the earth, they are the foundation

of every national privilege and transaction, in respect to the people in the United States.

A third transaction of national importance and obligation, which occurred on the 9th of July, 1778, was the formation of the Confederation. In this transaction the States adopted the "Articles of Confederation and perpetual union between the Thirteen United States." The sentiments, professions and obligations of the first Congress of the Colonies in 1774; the Declaration of Independence, 4th of July, 1776; and the Articles of Confederation, in 1778, were founded on the immutable principles of truth, justice, liberty and righteousness. These principles were professed, sanctioned and vindicated, from 1774 until the first of April, 1783, by the most important declarations and transactions; by an appeal to the Supreme Judge of the world; by a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence; by the pledge of our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor; and by all the counsels and prayers, labors and conflicts, treasures and blood, that were given and expended to maintain our rights and establish our Independence.

At the close of the war, on the first of April, 1783, it was agreed by the old Congress, after a sharp conflict on the subject, that the burdens on the States should be laid according to the population, counting three fifths of the slaves. On the final question respecting the method of counting the slaves, Rhode Island voted No! Massachusetts was divided. The other States voted—aye. Mr. Upham, in his speech in Congress, 10th May, 1854, on the repeal of the Missouri compromise, says, "This was the first compromise ever made between the slave-holding and the free States."—What was the occasion of this compromise? On the subject of taxation according to the number of the people, when the question arose, "How shall the slaves be counted," the Southern delegates maintained, that they were not to be counted, for they were property and not persons. But the Northern delegates contended, that they were persons and not property; and all ought to be counted. As the members of the Congress would not agree to what was true and right, they agreed, by a compromise, to what was false and wrong. They agreed to count five human beings, as only three persons, in their basis of taxation according

to the number of the people. In this compromise how did they account and treat their slaves? Were they persons, or were they property? Did each party maintain the truth, while they differed? Did either party maintain the truth, when they agreed, in the compromise, to account five human beings to be three persons? Was that compromise true, or false, right, or wrong, wise, or unwise? According to the self-evident principles, which are proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence and which are the foundation of our national existence, the first compromise, between the Northern and Southern States, renounced liberty for slavery, righteousness for unrighteousness and wisdom for folly.

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”



SECTION II. SECOND COMPROMISE.

For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

On the first of March, 1784, Virginia ceded to the United States her territory, north and west of the Ohio River. Other States having territory in the same region, followed her example; and the whole territory, northwest of the river, became the common property of the United States. On the possession of this property, a conflict arose on the question, whether it should be occupied by free labor, or slave labor? Upham says, in his speech on the 10th of May, 1854, “the struggle continued for years, with unabated energy and determination; and never could have been arrested, without a compromise.” On the very day of the cession from Virginia, a committee of Jefferson from that State, of Chase from Maryland and Howell of Rhode-Island, reported a plan for the temporary government of the Northwestern territory.

It was written by Jefferson and contained the following provision respecting the States, which might be formed within the territory ; “after the year 1800, of the Christian era, there shall be neither slavery, nor involuntary servitude in any of the said States, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, of which the party shall have been duly convicted to have been personally guilty.”

On the 19th of April, 1784, the anniversary of the Lexington battle, only ten years from the first bold and bloody conflict for liberty against slavery, the Congress of the United States rejected the ordinance for the exclusion of Slavery from their territory, though it was composed, offered and urged for their acceptance, by Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of our national Independence. On the 16th of March, 1786, fifteen years from the month of the Boston massacre, when the British troops fired on the inhabitants of Boston and murdered four men, the proposed ordinance for liberty against slavery, was again rejected, when offered by Rufus King, a delegate from New York. But, says Mr. Upham, “the people of the free States were then resolved, as I believe they now are and trust they ever will be, that this continent shall not be enveloped in Slavery ; and that a limit shall be put to its extension. The controversy was irreconcilable. The confederation could not have been preserved, and the States could not have continued under one government, had not a compromise, in the nature of a compact, been made. Such a compromise, or compact was made.” On the 9th of July, 1787, in the old Congress, the subject of a government for the Northwestern territory was referred to a Committee of five, Nicholas of Virginia was chairman and Nathan Dane of Beverly, Massachusetts, was a member. After two days only, this committee reported the celebrated “Ordinance of 1787.” It contains the prohibition of slavery in the territory ; in substance what Jefferson had endeavored to persuade that Congress to adopt, what Rufus King had advocated without success and what the slave-holding Representatives, for more than three years, had constantly resisted with inflexible determination and unanimity. But now, the very next day after it was reported, it was instantly accepted. Every Southern vote and every vote, North and South, is recorded in its favor, except the

single vote of Robert Yates of New York. Why was this great, sudden and total change? It was because there was attached to the restriction of slavery an obligation on the States, which might be formed in the territory, to permit the reclamation of fugitives from slavery: it was on account of this premium offered by the free States to the slave States, for the relinquishment of the claim to carry slavery into the territorial possessions of the United States. The ordinance of 1787 has the following article: "there shall be neither slavery, nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, of which the party shall be duly convicted: *Provided always*, that any person escaping into the same, from whom labor, or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming the labor, or service, as aforesaid." This arrangement was made unalterable and perpetual by the ordinance. "It is ordained and declared by the authority aforesaid, that the following articles shall be considered as articles of compact between the original States and the people and the States in the said territory; and for ever remain unalterable, unless by common consent." The constitution of the United States has sanctioned this compact by the article, that engagements formed before its adoption "should be as valid against the United States, under the Constitution, as under the Confederation." Such is the *Second Compromise* between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States. In the history of the United States no single enactment has been more celebrated or been more influential in its connections and consequences, than the ordinance of 1787; by which slavery was to be forever excluded from the Northwestern territory; and by which they, who should escape from slavery, are to be reclaimed and returned to involuntary servitude. While this ordinance has been constantly and highly applauded for its exclusion of slavery from the Northwestern territory, the permission and engagement for the reclamation of fugitives, by which that exclusion was obtained, have not received their deserved reprehension. The long and violent contention on this subject, that was ended by the Second Compromise, shows that however righteousness and unrighteousness may contend, they never can establish and maintain real fellowship. If they,

who have been engaged in such a contention, become united by a compromise, it is by a mutual agreement in unrighteousness and not in righteousness. It was unrighteous in the South to claim the territory for slavery ; and no less unrighteous for the North to obtain it for freedom by the return of the fugitives.

SECTION III. THIRD COMPROMISE.

“ For they have sown the wind ; they shall reap the whirlwind.”

While the Congress of the Confederation, in New York, were in session, a Convention was assembled and engaged in an attempt to devise a firmer union and organize a government, which should preserve the States from division and ruin. In the month of May, 1787, the Convention assembled in Philadelphia. In this Convention soon arose the question on the estimate to be made of the slaves. It was necessary to arrange a basis for the House of Representatives. It was admitted, that the population was the only practicable foundation for this purpose. But the question was—How shall the slaves be counted? When taxes were to be laid by the old Congress, in the year, 1783, the Southern delegates maintained, that the slaves were not to be counted, for they were property and not persons. But the Northern delegates contended, that they were persons and not property ; and all ought to be counted. Yet, now, when numbers and power were the object, in the House of Representatives, the Southern delegates contended, that all their slaves ought to be counted ; for they were persons and not property. But the North maintained, that the slaves were property and not persons ; and ought not to be counted in the representation of the people. The conflict on this sub-

ject, continued for months ; and was as obstinate and violent in the Convention, as had been the controversy in the old Congress respecting the Northwestern territory. When the contention respecting the Northwestern territory was settled by the Compromise of 1787. as it has been shown in the preceding section, then the controversy in the Convention was soon closed, by the three-fifths ratio in the estimate of the slaves, for the basis of representation in Congress.

The Missouri Compromise, in 1820, was a renewal of the great compact of 1787, not in spirit only. but in the very letter. It was formed by the restriction of Slavery within certain limits and the return of fugitives to slavery. The compromises of 1850 were formed on the same basis, in respect to the restriction of slavery and the return of fugitives. When the bill for the repeal of the Missouri compromise was debated in the year 1854, by the Congress of the United States, Mr Upham said : " This bill contemplates and if it becomes a law will constitute a radical and vital change in the policy, on which the Union of the States was formed, and by which its affairs have been administered through its entire history. It will be an abandonment of the course, that has been pursued from the first. The country will swing from her moorings ; and we shall embark, with all our precious interests, all the glorious recollections and all the magnificent prospects of this vast Republican empire, on an untraversed, unknown and it may well be feared, stormy, if not fatal sea." He declares and shows, " that the Constitution never could have been adopted by the States, or even formed by the Convention ; the present government could not have been established, nor even the Confederation been long maintained, had not certain compacts and engagements been arranged and solemnly confirmed by the two great sections of the Union." He maintains that the compromises are the solid basement, on which the whole structure of our Union stands ; that their spirit and essence run through the entire constitutional history of our country, and are the foundation, on which was established the Constitution. He says, " you can trace in this feature of our political system, the genius and hand of the Constitution from the turret to the foundation."

We have now given a very concise view of the Com-

promises, on which have been founded and controled the transaction of our national affairs and the administration of our national government from the cessation of hostilities for our Independence, until the present time. The old Congress of the Confederation and the Convention of the Constitution saw and felt the evils and dangers, which they expected to prevent by the Compromises of 1787 ; but we now see and feel the greater evils and dangers, which have arisen and still arise from the compromises of that period. The compromise of 1783, which was the foundation of the ratio of taxation ; the compromise of 1787, on which was settled, at that time, the contention respecting the Northwestern territory ; and the compromise of the same year, which established the basis for the representation of the people in Congress, are among the most important transactions, that have occurred in the history of the United States. They originated from the greatest difficulties that have ever embarrassed and perplexed our political interests ; and were preceded by the most violent and threatening controversies and contentions, that have ever existed in our National assemblies. These compromises demand and deserve a more earnest and impartial attention ; and a more serious and practical consideration than they have ever received from the people of the States ; or in the administration of the Federal government. Though the union and agreement in the adoption of these compromises were so harmonious ; they have been the occasion of constraint and violent difference and contention, almost seventy years, from the formation of the Constitution to this day. Never have the difference and contention been more dangerous, violent and fearful than at the present time. The compromises might have been administered for a precious and healthful opiate ; but they may yet prove to be a subtle and fatal poison. For the prevention of such evil and bitter effects, we ought, by a wise and thorough review and improvement of what is passed, to be induced to perceive and perform our present duty.

SECTION IV. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

"Yea ; and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right ?"

When Washington was chosen a delegate to the Convention, which formed the Constitution, he made every possible preparation for the duties of that important appointment. He was apprehensive, that the delegates would be under the influence of instructions, which might embarrass and retard, if they did not defeat the object, for which they were to assemble. He said : " My wish is, that the Convention may adopt no temporary expedients ; but probe the defects of the Constitution ;" (by which he meant the articles of the Confederation,) " to the bottom and provide a radical cure, whether they are agreed, or not. A conduct of this kind will stamp wisdom and dignity upon their proceedings ; and exhibit a light, which will sooner, or later, have its influence." When the Constitution was formed, it was not entirely satisfactory to the Convention, that formed it. But " faulty as it was, they looked upon it, as the best, that could be made in the existing state of things ; and as such, they wished it to be fairly tried. It was moreover remarkable, that what one called a defect, another thought its most valuable part ; so that in detail, it was almost wholly condemned and approved."—*Spark's Life of Washington, pages 401 and 403.*

After a trial of seventy years, the Constitution would be accounted, at this day, by an intelligent and impartial tribunal, to be neither less, nor more, worthy, or unworthy of condemnation and approbation than it was at the time of its formation and adoption. Every person can easily form a correct judgment of the compromises, which have been before us, in the three former sections of these considerations. As the Constitution was founded on these Compromises, in its fundamental principles and practical administrations it is in perfect agreement with the nature and effects of the foundation, on which it was established. Do the compromises of the Constitution agree with the Colonies, in their resolu-

tion by their first Congress, in the year, 1774, respecting Slavery? Do they agree with the self-evident principles, which are proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence? How is it, that the advocates of liberty and the advocates of slavery, at the present time, sustain their discordant sentiments and contentious practices by the Constitution? Does the Constitution promote, or prevent the objects, for which the people declare, in the preamble, they ordain and establish it? Is the basis of the representation and taxation, according to the Constitution, equal and righteous? How does the continuance of the foreign slavetrade, for twenty years, agree with the native equality of all human beings and the unalienable endowment, which they receive from their Creator? Is the domestic traffic, in the bodies and souls of men, consistent with that clause in the preamble, which declares, that the people ordain and establish the Constitution "to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity?" The Constitution declares, that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law;" and yet millions of persons, in these States, are deprived of these blessings against the laws of nature and of nature's God. The Constitution declares, "the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated;" and yet millions of the people are constantly liable, in these respects, to the most disgraceful and pernicious violations. What is expressly forbidden, by the Constitution, has been repeatedly committed, by the purchase of extensive territories, with their slaveholding population. Is not "the privilege of the *Writ of Habeas Corpus*" virtually suspended, in respect to every person, who is subjected to involuntary servitude? Is the return of a person, who has escaped from slavery, for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, consistent with every person's right to these blessings? The Constitution declares, that Congress shall not prohibit the free exercise of religion, or abridge the freedom of speech, or the press; yet, so far as it tolerates the existence and extension of slavery; it prevents the possession and enjoyment of these inestimable and inalienable privileges. The Constitution is inconsistent with the Declaration of Independence, with the

objects for which it was ordained and established by the people ; and with every article and provision in itself, that agrees with the fundamental and immutable principles and obligations of piety, patriotism and philanthropy. The Constitution agrees with the consistency and veracity, with which the Southern delegates, in the Congress of the Confederation, contended that the slaves were property and not persons ; and the Northern delegates contended they were persons and not property ; and then, in the convention of the Constitution, the Southern delegates contended that the slaves were persons and not property ; and the Northern delegates contended, that they were not persons. but property. Then in both cases, both parties settled the controversies and contentions, by compromises, which implied that the slaves were neither property, nor persons ; but three-fifths of either ; and that the delegates, who so counted the slaves, might themselves be accounted untrue and unwise. The inconsistent, ridiculous and suicidal absurdities, compromises and contradictions, on which the Constitution was founded, are involved in its discordant articles ; and have been experienced and manifested by its successive administrations and the various parties and factions, contentions and difficulties, which have continued and increased among the people until this day. As soon as we obtained our National Independence, by the first compromise respecting taxation and the second compromise respecting the Northwestern territory, in the Congress of the Confederation ; and then, by the third compromise, in the Convention of the Constitution, respecting the representation of the people, in the House of Representatives, after prolonged and determined controversies and contentions, we renounced, in respect to our fellow men, whom we held and still hold in involuntary servitude, the eternal principles of liberty, justice and truth, for the transient policy of slavery, injustice and falsehood. By such conduct we renounced the self-evident principles, which we proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, on which we appealed to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions ; and for the support of the Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we pledged our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor. By such conduct we have vilified our appeal

to the Supreme Judge of the world, for the rectitude of our intentions in the Declaration of Independence; we have forfeited the protection of Divine Providence; and have sacrificed the mutual pledge of our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor. Such are the deceitful and destructive nature and effects of avaricious and ambitious compromises, for which nations are induced to renounce righteous principles for unrighteous policy, liberty for slavery and the wisdom of God for the folly of man. In view of such conduct well may the Supreme and final Judge of the world ask—

“Yea! and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?”

SECTION V. POLITICAL DECLENSION.

“Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my Vineyard.”

The self-evident principles of philanthropy, patriotism and piety, which are proclaimed and implied in the Declaration of Independence, were exemplified and illustrated by the character and conduct of Washington. So far as we decline from the bright and shining light, which God has placed before us by his example, in our sentiments, privileges and obligations, we depart from the foundation of truth and duty, of wisdom, dignity and propriety. To form a correct judgment on this subject, it is proposed to exhibit a small number of specimens from his sentiments, instructions and prayers, which we ought to regard with gratitude to God and in honor to the memory of the man, who was once esteemed and ought now, in the present crisis of our national affairs, more than ever to be esteemed “first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his country.” From Washington’s orders, dated Newburg, 18th of April 1783, is selected the

following paragraph: "While the General recollects the almost infinite variety of scenes, through which we have passed, with a mixture of pleasure, astonishment and gratitude; while he contemplates the prospect before us with rapture, he can not help wishing, that all the brave men, of whatever condition they may be, who have shared in the toils and dangers of effecting this glorious revolution, of rescuing millions from the hand of oppression and of laying the foundation of a great empire, might be impressed with a proper idea of the dignified part they have been called to act, under the smiles of Providence, on the stage of human affairs. For happy, thrice happy, shall they be pronounced hereafter, who have contributed any thing, who have performed the meanest office in erecting this stupendous fabric of Freedom and Empire. on the broad basis of independency; who have assisted in protecting the rights of human nature and establishing an asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations and religions."

In Washington's Circular to the Governors of the States, Newburg, 18th June, 1783, with the most joyful and grateful congratulations on the glorious event, which Heaven has been pleased to produce in our favor, he accounts it his duty to offer his sentiments respecting some important subjects, which appear to be intimately connected with the tranquility of the United States. In view of past events and future prospects, he says: "yet it appears to me, there is an option still left to the United States of America, whether they will be respectable and prosperous, or contemptible and miserable, as a nation. This is the time of their political probation; this is the time, when the eyes of the whole world are turned upon them; the time to establish, or ruin their national character for ever: this is the favorable moment to give such a tone to the Federal Government, as will enable it to answer the ends of its institution: or this may be the ill-fated moment for relaxing the powers of the Union and annihilating the cement of the Confederation. For, according to the system of policy the States shall adopt at this moment, they will stand, or fall. And by their confirmation, or declension, it is yet to be decided, whether the revolution must ultimately be considered as a blessing, or a curse; a blessing, or a curse, not to the present age alone; for with

our fate will the destiny of unborn millions be involved." In the same Circular, having named the pillars, on which the glorious fabric of our independency and national character must be supported, he says : "*Liberty is the basis ; and whoever would dare to sap the foundation, or overturn the structure, under whatever specious pretext he may attempt it, will merit the bitterest execrations and the severest punishment, which can be inflicted by his injured country.*" He closes the Circular with an earnest prayer, "that God would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government ; and that he would be most graciously pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion ; without an humble imitation of whose example, in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation." In his speech on his entrance upon the duties of President, he says : "It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being, who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect." In the same speech he declares : "no people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of Providential agency." He declares, "no truth is more thoroughly established, than that there exists, in the economy and course of nature, an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness, between duty and advantage, between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the solid rewards of public prosperity and happiness. *We ought to be no less persuaded, that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation, that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained.*" In no other respect does the example of Washington appear more worthy of approbation and imitation, than in the spirit with which he accepted the offices, to which he was appointed in the service of his country. When he accepted the office of

General, he said: "I feel great distress, from a consciousness that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important trust. I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room, that I, this day, declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command, with which I am honored." On his election to the office of President he declared himself to be filled with the greatest anxieties; and that he ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies and was overwhelmed with despondence, as he inherited inferior endowments from nature, and was unpractised in the duties of civil administration." Let the spirit and judgment of Washington, respecting himself, be the test of the qualifications for office; and then judge how far we have fallen, from true weight and worth of character, in the men, who fill and seek to fill, at this day, the most important offices in the State and in the Church. Nor have the people less declined and fallen, in their spirit and judgment respecting the election of their public servants; and the objects and measures of their servants in the performance of their official duties. If a question remain respecting our political declension from the principles, with which we commenced our national existence and established our independence; and from the foundation of our liberties, principles and obligations, as they were exemplified and illustrated by Washington; let it be decided by an intelligent and impartial comparison of his administration and the present administration of the national government.

The Scripture must be fulfilled, as it is written: "This matter is by the decree of the Watchers and the demand by the word of the Holy ones; to the intent, that the living may know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will: *and setteth over it the basest of men.*"

SECTION VI. NATIONAL REFORMATION.

“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”

The perfections, purposes and promises of the one only living and true God in Three Divine Persons, as he reveals himself in the scriptures of truth and by the gospel of his wisdom and grace, are the immutable, omniscient and omnipotent foundation of confidence and assurance, for the reformation and happiness of the nations and families of the earth. At this day, it is not in distant prospect, but in the present movements of Divine Providence, that we perceive the certain tokens, that the “kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” Soon shall be fulfilled the glorious declaration, “The seventh angel sounded; and in heaven were great voices, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” What John saw in vision we now see in fact, “the angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth; and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, “fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him, who made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters.” Soon “follows another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Large potions of this wine have been drunken by the apostate nations and churches of Europe; and no small potions by the churches and people in the United States; who have largely partaken and still partake of her “merchandize in the bodies and souls of men.”

They, who have partaken of the sins of Babylon, must receive of her plagues, unless they repent, believe and obey the gospel; and wholly separate themselves from her abominations, cruelties and delusions. Who can doubt of the

duty and what ought to have been the conduct of the United States in respect to slavery, on the Declaration of Independence, with our solemn appeal to God for the rectitude of our intentions, our reliance on Divine Providence for protection and the mutual pledge of our lives, or fortunes and our sacred honor? What are the compromises, that have been adopted to quiet the discordant elements of liberty and slavery? What are the absurdities and inconsistencies in the Constitution of the United States? What the annihilation of compacts designed and engaged to prevent the extension of slavery? What are the present contentions and divisions in these States? and what the scenes of violence and blood in Kansas but the natural and certain effects of Slavery in the old States of the Union? Who, that has any holy fear of God and proper regard to man, can believe that we can have true peace, or safety, union or honor, liberty, or happiness, until slavery is extirpated and annihilated, in its roots and branches, from the whole land? Shall we blind and befool ourselves by the assumption, that liberty is national and slavery sectional? Liberty is not even sectional, while our national affairs are controled by the slaveholding and constitutional representation of the people in the Congress of the Union and in the election of President and Vice-President of the United States. What, then, is to be done in the present momentous crisis of our duties and interests? Shall the existing excitement and indignation against slavery and the present oppressive and intolerable administration of the general government limit our desires and prayers and exertions by no greater objects than a political organization, with special reference only, or chiefly to the approaching Presidential election and the exclusion of slavery from Kansas? These things ought to be done; and may God give speedy and righteous and triumphant success to present exertions for their accomplishment! But other things ought not to be left undone. In a very short time God will remove the iniquity of this land, either by mercies or by judgments. Mercy will rejoice against judgment; if with a penitent submission to Divine justice and an obedient reliance on Divine mercy, we perform our duty. *“So speak ye and so do, as they, who shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy.”*

Truth, justice and mercy, honor, liberty, holiness and salvation warrant and demand *the removal of Slavery from the Constitution and administration of the United States, by a Constitutional amendment.* According to the self-evident principles proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, it is the right, it is the duty of the people in these States, by an amendment of the constitution, to restore and secure unto the millions of our fellow men, who are holden in slavery, the blessings of liberty, for which they ordained and established the Constitution of the United States of America. Washington declares, "The basis of our political system is the right of the people to make and alter their Constitutions of government." He truly and wisely says, "the spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one; and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it, which predominate in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position." In intimate connection with the preceding observations, he says: "If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be, in any particular, wrong; let it be corrected by an amendment in the way, which the constitution designates: but let there be no change by usurpation. For though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance, in permanent evil, any partial or transient benefit, which the use can, at any time, yield." If we would be saved from the just vengeance of Heaven and obtain the mercy of God for ourselves and our children, we must remove the unjust and unwise compromises, on which was founded the Constitution and on which have been administered our national interests almost seventy years. Then "*God will be merciful to us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that his way may be known upon earth and his saving health among all nations.*"

Reformation, or Perdition is, at this day, the only alternative to every nation and people, to every family and person under heaven. *Slavery is the National iniquity of the people in these United States.* Let the removal of this iniquity be

accomplished by such a reformation as the Constitution admits and demands; then liberty shall be national; and slavery need not be and shall not be sectional. Let the whole people, South and North, East and West, beginning with the Ancient Dominion, whom all her sisters still love and will rejoice to honor; and whose star shone first and brightest, in our political horizon, against the Egyptian darkness of slavery, regard the example, instructions and prayers of Washington; and involuntary servitude, the iniquity of this land, shall be removed in one day. Then the relations, obligations and privileges of masters and servants, according to the Gospel, shall be continued and sanctified, be prosperous and happy. Such masters and servants may pass, with safety and honor, wherever they may please, without annoyance, or suspicion; and be received with affection and kindness. Such masters may give to their servants what is just and equal; knowing that they also have a Master in heaven. Then they will have the willing, cheerful and faithful labors of their servants, more cheaply and pleasantly and profitably than they can hold and keep, by involuntary servitude, the persons, who are deprived of the native rights of all human beings to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Such servants will receive, possess and enjoy the due reward of their labors; dwell quietly and happily in their own houses; and use their property to clothe and feed their children and for their instruction in their families, churches and schools. Then will be obtained what Washington desired, on the conclusion of the hostilities for our National Independence; and expressed in his circular letter to the Governors of the States, saying: "Let an attention to the cheerful performance of their proper business, as individuals and as members of society, be earnestly inculcated on the citizens of America. Then will they strengthen the bands of government and be happy under its protection. Every one will reap the fruit of his labors; every one will enjoy his own acquisitions, without molestation and without danger." Then will be answered his prayers, as expressed in his farewell Address to his fellow citizens, when he declared, "I shall carry with me to my grave, a strong incitement to unceasing vows,—that heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence, that your union and

brotherly affection may be perpetual, that the free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained, that its administration, in every department, may be stamped with wisdom and virtue, that the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing, as will acquire to them the glory of recommending liberty to the applause, the affection and adoption of every nation under heaven."

Wise, safe, blessed and honored be the State, that shall first remove involuntary servitude; and have neither part nor lot in the sale of men, women and children by auction; nor with the monsters of sin and shame, who dare to traffic, in defiance of Heaven's vengeance, in the bodies and souls of men. If the sons and daughters of voluntary servants are not needed in the employment with their parents, they can go and find employment and a residence, wherever they may choose under the protection and blessing of Divine Providence; and enjoy the rights and perform the duties of men, christians and citizens, in the communities, to which they may belong. Sufficient experiments have been made, in agreement with these observations, to show that such measures are practicable, successful and prosperous.

Of the iniquity of this land the Northern people and States are not less guilty than the Southern people and States. The North and the South, in the days of our honored fathers and worthy mothers, gave their counsels and prayers, their labors and sorrows, their treasures and blood, for the blessings of liberty for themselves and their children; for the Divine endowments and native rights of every human being; and for the eternal, immutable and inalienable obligations and privileges of piety and humanity. Shall we now deny and transgress our mutual obligations and forfeit, for ourselves and our children, the precious inheritance God has given us by the mutual exertions and sacrifices of our ancestors? Can the people of the North justify, or conceal such wickedness and folly, by their censures and complaints against the South? Can the people of the South conceal, or justify such conduct by contempt and triumph against the North? Can the young States, in the great and pleasant regions of the West, follow, or approve such conduct in the parental States of the Union?

Never, never since "God said, let there be light; and there was light," has been a people under heaven, who were called and bound, by stronger and holier bonds and more firm and tender cords, to reform and do their duty, than are the people in these States through the whole Union, North and South, East and West, from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans, to restore and maintain the principles of Liberty and Independence, on which we assumed, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station, to which we were entitled, by the laws of nature and of nature's God. Should we attempt to break these bands asunder and to cast away these cords from us; He, who sitteth in the heavens, shall laugh; the Lord shall have us in derision. Then shall he speak to us in his wrath; and vex us in his sore displeasure. While God waits to be gracious and speaks to us in his mercy, O may He incline our hearts to trust in his name and obey his gospel; then he will remove the iniquity of this land in one day. *And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.*

Providence, 15th May, 1856.